

The First and Second Readings in Easter Season

An Introduction to Easter Season

After celebrating Holy Week and Easter Sunday, the Church celebrates Easter Season for 50 days, focussed on Jesus' Resurrection, faith, and the growth of the infant Christian community. Almost all the Gospel readings for Easter Season are taken from the Gospel of John, and centre on the appearances of the risen Lord, the nature of faith in the risen Jesus, and the preparation of the Apostles for their future mission. Easter Season concludes with the Solemnities of the Ascension of the Lord and Pentecost Sunday. These form a bridge to the Solemnities that follow: the Holy Trinity, and the Body and Blood of Christ (*Corpus Christi*).

The First Readings

Every Sunday during the year, on all Sundays in the seasons of Advent and Lent, and on most major feast days, the First Reading is taken from an Old Testament text. However, the First Readings during Easter Season, including the Solemnities of Ascension and Pentecost, are always taken from Luke's *Acts of the Apostles* in the New Testament. They focus on similar themes to those in the Gospel readings, and highlight the life and work of the first Christian community in Jerusalem under Peter's leadership, and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The readings from *Acts* in Year A (2026) can be summarised briefly:

- In these verses, Luke paints a picture of the ideal Christian community where all believers commit themselves to common activities and to sharing their goods, 'according to what each one needed'. By living in this way, the community grew 'day by day'. *Acts 2:42–47*
- Peter addresses the Jews exclusively, to stress that Jesus' mission was ordained by God and would not be thwarted even though he had been put to death. He also stresses Jesus has received the Holy Spirit and that his place now is at God's right hand. *Acts 2:14,22–23*
- Peter continues to address the Jews, to affirm that Jesus is 'both Lord and Christ'. He urges them to repent and be baptised, to receive forgiveness and 'the gift of the Holy Spirit'. His preaching draws a strong, positive response. *Acts 2:14,36–41*
- To deal with disputes in the early community over food distribution, the Twelve asked the community of disciples to nominate seven men of specific merit to be the first deacons. These deacons were commissioned to service at table, while the Apostles continued to preach to unbelievers in the Temple. *Acts 6:1–7*
- Luke relates how Philip, one of the deacons, proclaimed Christ to a Samaritan village, baptising, curing people and driving out 'unclean spirits'. The Apostles Peter and John then went to the village to pray with the Samaritan converts, and to lay hands on them so they 'received the Holy Spirit'. *Acts 8:5–8,14–17*
- **Solemnity of the Ascension:** Luke again addressed His Excellency Theophilus, as he did when he began his Gospel, and described how Jesus had instructed the Apostles about their future ministry. Luke begins the account of their ministry by reporting Jesus' Ascension as an event experienced by the Apostles who had been commissioned to be Jesus' witnesses 'to the ends of the earth'. *Acts 1:1–11*

The Second Readings

On the Sundays of Easter Season in Year A, the Second Reading is from the *First Letter of Peter*. (In Year B we read from the *First Letter of John*, and in Year C from the *Book of Revelation* or *Apocalypse*.) On the Solemnity of the Ascension, the Second Reading is from Paul's *Letter to the Ephesians*.

The readings from *1 Peter* encourage us to a life of faithful holiness even in the face of unjust suffering and persecution, knowing that Christ has been raised from bodily death and has overcome sin so that we might be saved. Scholars believe this letter was probably written in Rome by a disciple of St. Peter who was also familiar with Pauline theological ideas. It has been dated from 70 A.D. to possibly as late as 90–95 A.D., during the reign of Emperor Domitian who persecuted the Christians.

These are brief summaries of the second readings in Year A (2026):

- This blessing opens the letter of Peter, giving praise to God who has raised Jesus. This event is a source of great joy that sustains those reborn in Christ, even during severe testing that in turn strengthens faith and leads to salvation. *1 Peter 1:3–9*
 - Being reborn as children of God means taking the divine Father as the model for our holiness. We have been freed from sin by the ransom paid by Christ, the 'lamb without spot or stain'. Through him we now have faith and hope in God who raised Jesus from the dead. *1 Peter 1:17–21*
 - To persevere in doing good, even in the face of suffering and persecution, is to follow the model Jesus Christ gave us. He bore our faults in his suffering on the cross to heal our wounds. We are called to respond with trust in God, 'shepherd and guardian of our souls', so that we 'live for holiness'. *1 Peter 2:20–25*
 - Just as the Lord is a living stone, precious to God, so through faith we are living stones who build a spiritual community. By living out our beliefs we become a chosen race, 'a people set apart to sing the praises of God'. *1 Peter 2:4–9*
 - By living a good life in Christ, with courtesy and respect even for those who slander believers, we are following the example of Christ who, though innocent, 'died once for sins, died for the guilty, to lead us to God' through his resurrection. *1 Peter 3:15–18*
 - **Solemnity of the Ascension:** This prayer of intercession expresses the hope that believers will grow in wisdom and knowledge of God. It is God's power that is revealed to us in Christ, raised from the dead and now seated at God's right hand, with 'all things under his feet', now and in the age to come. The Church, God's body with Christ as its head, benefits from God's all-embracing plan. *Ephesians 1:17–23*
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